

from the Author
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THE
GREAT IMPORTANCE
OF HAVING
Right SENTIMENTS in Religion:

A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED AT AN
ASSOCIATION OF MINISTERS,
AT
RINGWOOD, HANTS,
ON TUESDAY, THE 29th OF JULY, 1788.

BY THE REV. DAVID BOGUE,
OF GOSPORT.

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IT is not from inclination, but in compliance with the request of the Ministers and others who heard this discourse, that the author appears before the public. He can truly say, that he has searched the Scriptures for himself, without regard to articles, creeds, or confessions; and he here presents the result of his enquiries. He hopes that he has stated his sentiments with becoming candour; and he can with confidence assert, that his mind is open to conviction, and he has no other object in view but the acquisition and display of divine truth. Some may, perhaps, think him very much attached to a particular

system, but he can, from the bottom of his heart, declare, that he is sensible of no other attachment than that which is produced by a view of its excellence and a belief of its truth.

The author commits the discourse to the divine blessing, which can render the meanest performances useful, and makes this request of every impartial reader, who is, with humility of mind, and a serious disposition, seeking after just views of what God has revealed in scripture :

————— *Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti ; si non, his utere mecum.*

Gosport,
10th Aug. 1788.

2 TIMOTHY, i. 13.

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.

IT has been judged proper, by the members of this association, to have the sermons of one part of the day on subjects that embrace a system of divine truth. Two discourses have already been delivered in this form. The first was on the insufficiency of reason, and the necessity of a divine revelation. The second had for its theme, the evidences and excellency of the Christian Religion. The subject allotted to me is, "the great Importance of having right Sentiments in Religion;" or, in other words, the vast consequence of having just Views of Christianity, in opposition to Heresy and Error. I need not mention to you, that persons, professing to be the disciples of Jesus Christ, maintain very different opinions with regard to things that the Gospel represents to be of the greatest moment. They have different
views

views of God, of Christ, and of man; and some say, it is of no moment what a person's sentiments are, if his life be good. The words of the text speak a different language. "Hold fast," says Paul to Timothy, "the Form of sound Words," i. e. the system of divine truth. In discoursing from this passage, I shall endeavour,

I. To point out the very great importance of having right sentiments in religion, and of holding the truth as it is in Jesus.

II. Enquire what right sentiments are; and by what marks we may be able to distinguish truth from error.

III. Direct you to the proper improvement of the subject.

And may God lead us by his Spirit into all truth; and enable us to speak and to hear to our edification and comfort.

I. I shall endeavour to point out the very great importance of having right Sentiments in religion.

Here the following considerations are worthy of our attention.

i. The Scripture clearly points out the truth, and distinguishes it from error. It is the design of the Spirit of God, in the word, to set before us that system of divine doctrine, which, if believed and improved, will save our souls. That we may
more

more easily discover and understand it, the same truth is represented in a variety of places, and in different points of view, and with different concomitant circumstances. To preclude, with still greater certainty, the danger of mistaking, error is held out in opposition to the truth, that, by beholding them both at one glance, the truth may appear more luminous by a contrast with what is false: and, as artificial flowers shew their origin more clearly when placed near to those that grow in the garden, which are coloured with the beautiful tints of nature; or, as counterfeit money discovers its baseness when laid down by what is sterling; so the falsehood of error appears more striking when it is held up along with divine truth.

2. The Scripture directs us to embrace the truth and to hold it fast. We have an exhortation to this purpose in Prov. xxiii. 23. "Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." To what can this be more properly applied than to the doctrines of divine revelation? The expression implies a diligent search after truth, a high esteem and love of it, and a resolution to be possessed of it whatever it may cost. We are required to part with wealth in order to purchase it, and, when we have obtained it, though all the gold of Ophir were held out to us as its price, we are to reject the offer with disdain. The New Testament speaks the same language. What was the preaching of Jesus Christ but a clear and affecting display of the truth? And are not the invitations of the Gospel directions to receive the truth and to hold it

it fast? The words of the text are, one of many exhortations to this purpose in the writings of the apostles, " Hold fast the Form of sound Words, " &c." The pure Christian Doctrine, that Timothy had heard from the lips of Paul, he is commanded to hold fast, and not to part with on any consideration. As the truth is of as much value and importance to us as it was to him, the command may justly be considered as given to us also.

3. The Scripture warns us against error. Ye know well how earnestly God entreats his ancient people, the children of Israel, to guard against the false doctrine and erroneous worship of the nations round about them. Deut. xii. 30, 31, 32. " Take heed to thyself, that thou be not snared " by following them, after that they be destroyed " from before thee; and that thou enquire not " after their gods, saying, how did these na- " tions serve their gods? Even so will I do like- " wise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy " God; for, every abomination which he hateth " have they done unto their gods; for, even " their sons and their daughters they have burnt " in the fire to their gods. What thing soever " I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not " add thereunto, nor diminish from it." Ye will find a general warning against error in Prov. xix. 27. " Cease, my son, to hear the instruction " that causeth to err from the words of know- " ledge." When Christianity makes its appear-
ance in the world, a multitude of errors, that had been sown by the great adversary, spread abroad their branches; he continued to sow more, and they

shew along with the truth. Had our Lord and his apostles looked upon these to be harmless mistakes, they would not have troubled themselves to say aught about them; but, instead of silence on the subject, we find the strictest cautions given to the disciples of Jesus to guard against error. Hear how Christ the master speaks on this head, Matt. vii. 15: "Beware of false prophets." Again in Matt. xvi. 6. "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees:" and at the 12th v. he plainly tells them, it was of the false doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees that he desired them to take heed. At the conclusion of his ministry, foreseeing the evils that would arise from erroneous doctrines, he says, Mark xiii. 22, 23: "For, false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, the very elect; but take ye heed, behold I have foretold you all things." The apostles speak in the same strain: "Beware (says Paul, Phil. iii. 2.) of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." And as Christians are warned against Jewish errors, so likewise against false doctrines from the Gentiles, Col. ii. 8. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." The same apostle, when writing to Timothy, 2 Ep. iv. 3, 4. laments it as a bad time indeed, "when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: when they shall turn away their ears

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“ from the truth and shall be turned unto
 “ fables.” These are a few out of many pas-
 sages, that might be presented to illustrate and
 confirm this position. Now, if divine truth had
 not been of unspeakable importance, would the
 writers of the Old and of the New Testament
 have thus joined in the most earnest and forcible
 warnings to guard against error?

4. The Scripture sets before us the danger of
 embracing error, and its pernicious effects. So
 far are the sacred writers from representing error
 as a harmless thing, that they always speak of it
 as attended with considerable danger. Listen to
 the words of the apostle Paul, in Gal. i. 6, 10.
 “ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from
 “ him that called you into the grace of Christ,
 “ unto another gospel, which is not another;
 “ but there are some that trouble you and would
 “ pervert the gospel of Christ; but though we,
 “ or an angel from Heaven, preach any other
 “ gospel unto you than that which we have
 “ preached unto you, let him be accursed. As
 “ we said before, so say I now again, if any man
 “ preach any other gospel unto you than that ye
 “ have received, let him be accursed.” After
 hearing these words, who can imagine that Paul
 looked upon it as a matter of indifference, what
 sentiments in religion men hold. Does it not
 appear clear as the noon day, that he considered
 error as a dangerous thing? Why else does he
 pronounce the preacher of it accursed? And re-
 member, this is not the flame of unhallowed
 passion, bursting forth from a malicious heart,
 but the sacred fire of divine truth kindled by the
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Holy Ghost, in a soul that is burning with pure and fervent love to God and man. It is the decision of Jehovah himself. Do not imagine this is the only passage in the word of God, where the dangerous consequences of error are held up to view. In several other parts of this epistle, he charges the Galatian converts to watch against the insinuations of those teachers, who mingled the Jewish rites with Christianity; and hints, that if they attended to their false doctrines, the Gospel would do them no good, ch. iv. 11. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." And, ch. v. 2, 4. "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." The apostle speaks in the same awful language to the believers at Colosse, who were in danger from persons who blended the Gentile philosophy with the truth, ch. ii. 18. "Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." There is a passage in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, that expresses the importance of right sentiments in religion, and the great danger of error with still greater force, ch. ii. 10, 11, 12. "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Consider these passages as a specimen of the manner in which the sacred writers speak in regard to truth and error on matters of religion. What instruction do they convey to the attentive mind? That it is a matter of indifference what mens opinions are? Is not rather this impression forcibly made upon the heart; that, in the sight and judgement of God, it is of unspeakable importance to have right sentiments in religion, and that error is a very dangerous thing?

5. The importance of having right views of religion appears from the very nature of the thing. All goodness of disposition, all excellence of temper and conduct, arises from the impression of truth upon the soul. We see, in the vegetable world, that every seed produces a plant or tree of the same kind with itself, whether it be wholesome or poisonous. It is so in the moral world too; every doctrine, whether it be good or bad, has a tendency to produce its like in the soul. Or, we may compare the influence of religious maxims to the impression of the seal upon the wax; whatever the form of the seal is, it makes a correspondent impression. In like manner, a truth of God's word will produce in the soul a divine impression that will make it wise and good; whereas error produces an impression like itself, false and bad, and, instead of doing good, injures the soul by creating an improper disposition and temper. This, I hope, appears plain, and it evidently shews, that error is by no means a harmless thing. We judge so in other matters, where there is an obvious resemblance. Wholesome food nourishes and strengthens the body;

body; but, who will say, that poison is equally useful, or even that it is harmless? It will destroy the mortal frame. Truth is the food of the soul, that nourishes and improves it: this is a figure often used in holy writ. Error, on the contrary, operates as poison on the soul. Truth resembles the tree of life, of which, whosoever eateth shall live for ever. Error is like the tree of knowledge, the fruit of which produces death. To illustrate the matter by a different comparison. If you are going on a journey from the capital of the kingdom, to a place that lies to the south, you do not imagine, that the roads that lead to the east, and north, and west, will conduct you to it; there is one way that will bring you to the place of your destination; every step you take in the other roads will carry you to a greater distance from the right path. Truth is the way to heaven; divine truth is at once the road and the guide; it produces the temper that makes the soul meet for heaven. Error is a road that leads the traveller in a different direction; as it is not a guide sent from God, it will not conduct the soul to God. Truth is given as a lamp to our feet, that we may not stray from the right path. Error is the wild fire of the night, that deludes the traveller from the road into morasses and pits of destruction. Truth is from above, error is from beneath; the one will make us like God, the other will stamp a very different resemblance; each conducts the persons who listen to it to the place whence it comes.

These brief hints are, I hope, sufficient to convince you of the great importance of holding the truth as it is in Jesus, and of the danger of those
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who are led away by the error of the wicked. You are now disposed to enquire with concern of mind, and with a better disposition than he had from whom we borrow the words, "What is truth?" I will endeavour to give you an answer under the

II. Head of discourse, to which I now proceed, namely, what right sentiments are, and by what marks we may be able to distinguish truth from error.

In illustrating this head of discourse, I shall first set before you some marks or characters by which right sentiments may be known; and then, secondly, examine, by means of these marks, what right sentiments are.

¹First, I beg your attention to some marks, or characters, by which right sentiments may be known. These shall be drawn from the word of God, which is the only infallible rule of faith and conduct; and they are not extracted from a single passage by torturing it to make it favour a particular scheme, but flow naturally from the general strain and spirit of the sacred oracles.

1. Right sentiments represent God as clothed with every perfection, and as doing every thing in an entire consistency therewith. His word describes him to us as infinitely powerful, wise, holy, just, and good. These are essential qualities of his nature, and in his dispensations nothing will be found that contradicts either his holiness, justice, goodness, or truth. Mercy will not perform an action that tramples justice beneath

neath her feet. Compassion will not bring anything to pass that makes rational and humble creatures justly cry out, "What is become of the divine holiness? God discovers no hatred of iniquity:" nor will Almighty power do aught that insults or contradicts his essential goodness.

2. Right sentiments represent human nature, in its fallen state, to be in a very deplorable condition. This representation runs through the sacred writings. It is asserted in the doctrinal parts, it is luminously displayed in the histories and facts. Christ has plainly taught it to us in his conversation with Nicodemus, John iii. 3, 6. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and, except a man [not one but every man] be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." His apostles deliver the same doctrine, Eph. ii. 3. "We are by nature children of wrath: and the whole world is guilty before God." This doctrine is as clearly taught by historical facts. Read the ~~found~~ Scriptures, you will there find the first man that was born into the world imbruing his hands in his brother's blood. Then you read, that all flesh, except one family, had corrupted their way, and the earth was filled with violence. Before those were dead who had been saved from the flood, you observe idolatry extensively prevail. The history of the Jewish nation shews you a perverse and disobedient people, almost continually rebelling against God. At the time of the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles, if we except the Jews, and those that were taught by their means, we do not find,

find, notwithstanding all the influence of learning and philosophy, one kingdom, one city, one village, or one society, or one individual, that was not sunk into the impurities of Pagan idolatry. If these facts furnish not an incontestable proof of the depravity, guilt, and wretchedness of the human race, no proof can possibly be brought; for, it is here written as with a sun-beam:

3. Right sentiments fill the mind with the highest ideas of the dignity, power, and love, of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to select, from the whole compass of language, words that could give us more exalted thoughts of the original glory of our Redeemer, than those that are used by the sacred writers. He is said to be "God—
 " God over all, blessed for ever; God who made
 " the world, who was in the form of God, and
 " who thought it not robbery to be equal with
 " God:—God manifest in the flesh, in whom
 " dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."
 The perfections peculiar to Deity are ascribed to him. His humiliation is represented as the most wonderful thing that ever did or ever will take place. We are commanded to honour the Son even as we honour the Father. In baptism we are devoted to the Son equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost; and the Lord's supper is a religious ordinance instituted to his honour, that there his disciples may worship and adore him. Attend to these and to the whole strain of the New Testament, and (when it does not speak of him merely in his human nature, which is sometimes the case, or as Mediator) you will find the inspired writers use such modes of expression, as
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If we were in no danger of entertaining too exalted sentiments of Jesus Christ.*

4. Right sentiments ascribe our restoration to the divine favour, entirely to the grace of God, to the death of Christ, and to the power of the Holy Ghost. This is agreeable to the whole tenor of the New Testament. If particular passages be judged necessary to confirm the doctrine, read the following: John iii. 1-18. Ephes. ii. 1-10. Tit. iii. 3-7. Pet. ii. 24.-iii. 18. Rev. v. 9. Let a person peruse these parts of God's word with an unprejudiced mind, and with a meek and humble heart; let him take the words in their natural obvious meaning, as certainly should be done in a Book that was intended for the husbandman and mechanic as well as for the learned and the noble; let him view the passages in their true connection, and let him follow the same rules of interpretation that he would in explaining the sense of the Greek and Roman classical writers; and he will soon and certainly find the truths that I have just mentioned.

5. Right sentiments, when they are received into the heart and begin to produce their effect, create very great anxiety and concern of mind. The person feels great uneasiness, great grief, and frequently great terror and distress of conscience. See this exemplified in the parable of the prodigal son; in the behaviour of Peter's hearers, Acts ii. 37; in the conversion of St. Paul, and in the

* See this subject admirably illustrated by Bp. Sherlock in his Discourses on Phil. ii. 5, 11. Vol. iv.

conduct of the jailor of Philippi. The promises of the Old Testament, that describe the reception of the word in the days of the Gospel, express just such effects as I have mentioned: Ezek. xxxvi. 31. Zechar. xii. 10; and the very nature of faith and repentance, with the affections of soul that they excite, establishes the justness of this mark.

6. When right sentiments are embraced and received with a lively faith, they fill the heart with peace and hope. An attentive reader of the word of God will observe this both in the doctrines and tempers of the inspired writers, and in the dispositions of the primitive Christians. Peace and hope naturally flow from the reception of the Gospel, and are described as its genuine effects in John xvi. 33. "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace:" and, Rom. v. 1. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." See, too, 1 Pet. i. 8.

7. Right sentiments produce an habitual dependence on God for his grace and assistance at all times. This is a peculiar trait of the Christian religion. One of the Heathen philosophers speaks to this purpose in an address to the gods: "Give me health and the enjoyments of life: I will give myself virtue." Widely different is the language of the New Testament, and entirely excludes boasting. John xv. 5. "Without me ye can do nothing." An apostle who remembered this saying of Christ, in the hour of temptation,

tion, prayed to him thrice for help, and received from his Lord the following answer: 2 Cor. xii. 9. " My grace is sufficient for thee; for, " my strength is made perfect in weakness." Having experienced the efficacy of this grace, he says, " I can do all things though Christ, who " strengtheneth me; and, the life, that I live in " the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of " God." Such is the temper of every disciple of Jesus Christ.

8. Right sentiments produce a conduct that is far superior to heathen morality in its extent, its principle, and its ends. There is a difference between these two. Christian obedience has all that is good in Pagan morality, but it includes unspeakably more; it has a regard to God, to Christ, to the Holy Spirit; it flows from a heart sanctified by divine grace; it respects mens souls as well as their bodies, and extends to the thoughts, affections, and desires, as well as to the words and actions.

9. Right sentiments produce a great delight in the exercises of religion. Prayer is unspeakably pleasing, and the reading of the word; and the soul delights in the worship of God, both in public and in private, and in pious discourse. The spirit of unfeigned devotion will naturally take pleasure in conversing with God. We learn, from the Acts and from the Epistles, that this was the disposition and practice of the primitive believers, and it is frequently inculcated in the apostolical writings.

10. Right sentiments inspire the heart with hope, and peace, and joy, at the hour of death. Behold this exemplified in the case of Stephen, who was supported in his last moments by a view of Jesus standing at the right hand of God ready to receive him, and who with a lively faith commits his departing soul into his Redeemer's hands, saying: " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." See likewise the influence of just views of religion in the apostle Paul, when looking forward to the season of his departure: 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8. " For, I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." St. John, the divine, furnishes us with a third example. At the conclusion of the Scripture, the blessed Saviour gives his servant this important information. Rev. xxii. 20. " Surely I come quickly." The good man looks forward to the rest that remains beyond the grave, and replies, with the affecting language of hope and of desire: " Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Indeed the Christian Doctrine, from its very nature, is calculated to produce similar effects in all true believers.

11. Right sentiments kindle in the breast a fervent zeal and a deep concern for the salvation of the souls of others. This is their genuine effect. He, who has felt the power of true religion, sees

sees the misery of sinners to be so great, and the happiness offered in the Gospel to be so exalted, that he anxiously desires they may be translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and may receive the forgiveness of their sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith in Christ: and these desires lead to diligent and unwearied endeavours in order to accomplish so valuable an end. Once more :

12. Right sentiments will always have enemies to ridicule and to resist them, and may be known by this mark : They will be ever opposed by the self-righteous and the worldly-wise. It was thus in the days of Christ's abode upon earth. The Pharisees and the Sadducees set themselves against the truth, and they were the self-righteous and the free-thinkers of that day ; they thought themselves too good, and too wise, to listen to Jesus Christ. The same scene is presented again in the age of the apostles. The doctrine of the cross " was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and, to the " Greeks, foolishness." The philosophers among the Gentiles despised Christianity so much as to account it foolishness itself. In the very same light will it appear to persons of the same disposition in every age,

These are so many marks of right sentiments by which the truth may be distinguished from error. I now proceed,

Secondly, under this head, to make use of those marks, by applying them to received doctrines

trines and systems, and to shew you what right sentiments are. That very different opinions, with regard to religion, take place, is known to all. Without descending to every distinct class, we may consider them as divided into two; the one is the evangelical system; the patrons of the other have assumed to themselves the name of Rational Christians. Which of the two has the best and strongest foundation for their sentiments in the word of God, which is the supreme reason, I shall now enquire.

Those of evangelical sentiments say, that God, who is infinitely wise, holy, just, and good, cannot and will not act contrary to any one of these perfections; that, under his righteous administration, sin will meet with deserved punishment, and that mercy will never be displayed without a due regard to the injured rights of justice and sanctity. Accordingly, they maintain, that, agreeably to their system, in the great work of redemption, while mercy conveys invaluable blessings to the human race, the rights of justice are fully vindicated, and holiness shines forth with pure and awful beams.

Compare, with this, the sentiments of those who call themselves Rational Believers, and try if they agree with the mark. According to them, God is infinitely merciful: but we do not, at the same time, discover in his character the venerable lustre of infinite sanctity, which looks upon every sin with a perfect abhorrence. Justice, too, that will by no means clear the guilty, but in-

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sists on the punishment of disobedience, though sought for, is not to be found. Is it not strange that this quality, which is so essential to every subordinate good governor, should be denied to the Supreme? But how can it be denied? does not the Scripture, in a thousand places, assert the justice of the Most High? It does. In such cases the common refuge is to various readings, new translations, and interpolations. These are the sanctuary of Rational Believers when the sacred Scripture, which we think the best and highest reason, speaks fully and plainly against their system. A new pillar has lately been erected the better to support this sanctuary. Evangelical Christians look at it with horror. It is composed of the mistakes of the inspired writers, who, they say, relate facts improperly, and often argue weakly, and in an inconclusive manner. But, though there were no passage of Scripture that directly asserted God's justice, there is still sufficient evidence of it remaining from historical facts.

If you saw a sovereign sit as judge on the tribunal, and try twenty persons who had been guilty of robbery and murder, and condemn them to instant death, and put the sentence in immediate execution, could you entertain a doubt of his justice? Would you give credit to one who would assert, "that sovereign is all mercy and
 "goodness; his heart does not contain stern
 "justice that punishes crimes." Now, if I behold the great Sovereign of the universe, in the course of his moral government, put to death millions of transgressors by the deluge; rain down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah;
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cut off the nations of Canaan by the sword of Israel; and afterwards, on account of the crimes of Israel, destroy millions of them by the arms of Nebuchadnezzar, and millions more by the victorious legions of Rome;—is it possible for me to doubt that God is just? However loudly and confidently I might assert that God is all mercy and goodness, I could not expect to be believed; for, I am contradicted by the clear evidence of facts, which proclaim that God is just and punishes iniquity. Here then is a fundamental error in this system: there is a manifest defect in their character of God. It agrees not with the representation given of him in Scripture, and with the mark that is drawn from it; and we need not wonder if this mistake in a first principle lead to very many errors in the system of theology.

Again, according to evangelical sentiments, human nature is at present in a state of apostacy and guilt. Depravity pervades every power of our souls; and guilt stains every descendant of Adam. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” For this guilt man is unable to make atonement by his own merit or by any thing that he can do or suffer. And his depravity is so great, that he is wholly incapable, by the utmost exertions of his own powers, to renew and change his heart, and to live in the love of God.

The other scheme presents a very different view of things. Human nature, they say, has received little if any injury from the fall. Man’s dispositions are naturally good if not corrupted by bad advice

advice of example: and by a proper exertion of his faculties and powers he can recommend himself to the favour of God, and make his heart and life what they ought to be. But does this description agree with the second mark? does it agree with the account that the Scripture gives us of the helpless and miserable condition of human nature without a Saviour? does it accord with the whole strain of the New Testament, which admires and adores the infinite love of God in sending his Son to save sinners, who must have been undone for ever without his interposition and grace? Examine and judge.

Those of evangelical sentiments assert that Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, is God and man in one person, or God manifest in the flesh. He possesses the divine perfections of wisdom, power, and goodness; and, with respect to these, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but, in infinite condescension, he took the human nature into union with the divine, that he might be qualified to be the Redeemer of guilty men. They do not think that they can comprehend this mystery; but, as they read in the Scripture, a Book written to guard us against idolatry, that the Saviour is the mighty God, they are led to judge that there are certain distinctions in the divine nature consistent with the most perfect unity; and, as the divine mind is infinitely above ours, and is imperfectly known by us both from our finite capacity and from the limited degree of Revelation, they do not pretend to explain it, but firmly believe its truth, because God has revealed it, and submission to his testimony is judged by

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them the most perfect exercise of reason. While the evangelical doctrine humbles the sinner and exalts the Saviour, by the other scheme the sinner is exalted and the Saviour is abased. The Arian degrades Christ from his deity to a creature: the Socinian reduces him to the condition of a mere man, and makes his life a pattern of obedience only, and his death of suffering, and a confirmation of his doctrine. Into these, according to their doctrine, all the exalted expressions of Scripture, concerning the divinity, incarnation, righteousness, and atonement of Christ, do dwindle. With what justice let an impartial reader of the word of God consider and determine. On their scheme of interpretation, I am sure more inaccurate, obscure, and blundering writers, and more liable to deceive, than the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, were never seen since the beginning of time.

I proceed to examine doctrines by the fourth mark; and beg your attention to the evangelical system, which speaks thus: "The salvation of man takes its rise from the grace of God as the only moving cause. No goodness of ours influenced him to this display of his love. The righteousness flowing from the obedience and death of Christ is the only meritorious cause of our acceptance with God; and we are pardoned and justified not for our own sake, but for Christ's alone. Our sanctification proceeds from the efficacious influences of the Holy Ghost; and it is his office, in the economy of redemption, to enlighten the understanding and to renew the soul. It is our duty to
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" use the various means of God's appointment
 " in order to obtain this invaluable blessing; but,
 " at the same time, our dependence must be
 " placed in the power of the sacred Spirit, who
 " alone can sanctify us wholly, in spirit, and soul,
 " and body." This doctrine is agreeable to the
 mark: I think it is perfectly agreeable to the
 word of God.

Compare with this the other scheme, which I think errs widely from the truth in regard to the method of our salvation. Who is there, that, in reading the writings and hearing the discourses of its supporters, finds free grace extolled and magnified from the consideration of the ignorance, guilt, and misery of man! But is not this a common and favourite topic with the sacred writers? The merits and atonement of Christ, as the procuring cause of our pardon and justification, are by the Socinian utterly discarded; and he will not allow the life and death of Christ, with regard to merit, to have any more influence on our pardon and acceptance than the life and death of Moses or of Paul. Whether this is at all according to the general tenor of Scripture judge ye. Our sanctification, such as they represent it, is produced, they say, by the exertion and energy of the powers of the soul, and by the force of good resolutions. The influences of the Spirit some of them will not allow: they ridicule the idea. Others retain the word; but they deny the thing, and mean nothing more by divine grace than the effect of moral swasion upon the heart. Permit me to ask, whether such opinions as these be supported by the natural meaning of

the words which the sacred writers make use of, not once or twice, but whenever they write on these subjects. A greater perversion of language can scarcely be conceived. Surely, if their scheme be just, the most rude and illiterate peasant that ever tilled the earth, if left entirely to himself, would express his ideas with infinitely greater clearness and precision than the apostles of Christ have done, though guided by the inspiration of the holy Spirit of God.

If we consider right sentiments with regard to the influence that they have, when they are received into the heart, the evangelical doctrine may be represented in the following manner. As soon as the principles of religion enter the mind, the person becomes concerned about his everlasting salvation. He looks back upon his past life with grief, horror, and dread: he feels himself to be lost and perishing: he is afraid of the divine displeasure, and sensible that he can neither atone for his own guilt, nor sanctify his own nature, and that it would be righteous in God to leave him to perish, he cries out, in the language of the publican, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Whilst he is in this distress of mind the Scripture directs him to the infinite mercy and grace of God as a most powerful encouragement for hope, to the death of Christ as a full atonement for his guilt, and to the holy Spirit as able to sanctify his nature. Encouraged by the invitations of the Gospel, and influenced by divine grace, he believes the record that God has given, "That eternal life is in his Son." He trusts in the atonement of Christ for the forgiveness of
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of his sins, and in the merit of his obedience for his justification with God, and he depends on the grace of the Spirit of Christ for the renovation of his soul. In consequence of this, hope springs up within his breast. He finds peace in believing; the dominion of sinful dispositions is destroyed, and grace reigns in him through righteousness unto eternal life. Thus it was with the primitive believers, thus it was with Paul, with Peter's converts on the day of Pentecost, and with the jailor; and thus is the reception of the truth into the heart with its effects described in holy writ. Nay, I humbly hope, my dear hearers, we can say that we have felt such effects from the principles of the Gospel on our own minds: and those of us, who preach the word, can bear testimony that we have seen very many examples of a ~~singular~~ *sum* influence of the truth on the souls of others. We have found persons deeply convinced of sin, and applying to us in the bitterness of their soul with this question: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Our reply was the same with the Apostle Paul's: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved." We have observed them obtain peace of conscience through faith in his blood: and, at the same time, iniquity became hateful to them, and it was made the business of their life to guard against every thing that is evil, and to adorn the doctrine of God, their Saviour, by a life and conversation becoming the Gospel. It appears then, that evangelical doctrine produces the very same effects now, that the preaching of the apostles did. It convinces men of sin, and it produces peace, holiness, and joy.

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But do we find the doctrine of those, who call themselves Rational Christians, attended with these effects? Are men by their preaching and their writings convinced of sin, and in deep distress of conscience, because of the divine displeasure which they have incurred? Can they say, that they are often applied to by mourning transgressors bewailing their sins, and asking what they shall do to inherit eternal life? If not, have they not reason to suspect, that there is something amiss, and something defective in their sentiments, as the effects that naturally flow from the truth are not produced? Pray, examine the matter with attention. Perhaps I may be told, that these uneasy feelings are mere enthusiasm. But if you will allow, that it is reasonable for a dutiful son to be deeply grieved when he is deprived of a valuable and affectionate father; for a man to be in great distress when he loses all his estate and is reduced to beggary; and for a criminal to feel anguish of soul when he is under a sentence of death; I will engage to prove with equal, nay with superior evidence, that it is more rational for him to feel deep distress, who by his sins has lost the favour of God, has forfeited eternal blessedness, and is condemned by the righteous judgement of God to never-ending misery.—Or, do we find converts among them filled with joy and peace in believing, and happy in the provision that the Gospel has made for their relief. Some may be much delighted, that they are not so great transgressors as others are, and may take confidence from viewing their few and small iniquities according to their judgement: but, shall we find a person conscious of his many
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and great iniquities, sensible of all their aggravations, and yet rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and enjoying peace in him? If this be not the case, we are not to wonder; because sinners are not directed to Christ and his grace for pardon and peace, but only to amendment of life. Now, if primitive Christianity produced the distress and the joy that I have mentioned; if evangelical sentiments produce the very same effects in every respect; and, if that other system does not produce them; is there not reason to conclude, that there is something wrong in it, and that it is not the same system that was preached by Christ and his apostles?

Farther, I observed, that right sentiments produce in the mind an habitual dependence on God for his assistance at all times. This is the temper most strongly recommended and most clearly exemplified in Scripture, as the temper of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Evangelical principles produce the same disposition in every respect; and he who lives under their influence, constantly depends on God for a supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, to convey to him wisdom, direction, strength, and consolation. He feels his own insufficiency, and this leads him to a reliance on superior aid; he experiences the benefit of help from on high, and is thereby influenced to apply for it on every occasion. Here, then, is a manifest agreement between the doctrine of Scripture and the evangelical doctrine on this point.

Is the same temper observable in the other system? I imagine it will be found greatly defective; some of its votaries speak of divine assistance, but mean by it nothing more than what, in the common course of providence, men receive in the management of those temporal affairs that are crowned with success. Others in their writings and discourses go upon this principle, that divine aid is unnecessary, that man can do every thing that is required of him, and that, with the heathen philosopher of old, they can procure virtue for themselves: others go farther, and deride the idea of superior aid, and brand the assertors of it with enthusiasm and sloth: but let an impartial reader of the word of God compare this temper with the example and doctrine of the inspired writers, and a manifest disagreement will evidently appear.

It may be more difficult to draw a comparison between these systems as to Christian obedience and a holy life. The holiness of the Gospel is far superior to pagan morality in its principles, motives, and extent; it has a form peculiar to itself, which is given it by the doctrines of Christianity. Those who maintain the sentiments, that are called evangelical, give us a just representation of it so far as they act according to their principles. Depending on God for help, they endeavour to perform every duty they owe to God, not only as their Creator, but also as their Redeemer and Sanctifier, and every demand of integrity, goodness, and benevolence, to their fellow-creatures. Their obedience is peculiarly formed by the Gospel; it flows from love to God
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and from the grace of his Spirit; it follows the example of Christ, and looks for acceptance only through him; and, while it performs the external acts of obedience, it shews particular attention to the thoughts and affections of the soul, that they be right as to the principles and motives.

Is the same regard shewn by those of the other sentiments to every part of that obedience which the Gospel requires? As to the decent oeconomies of social life I shall say nothing, nor charge them with any defect. But, are those virtues that may be called purely evangelical, carried to as great a height in respect to their principle and end? Are the duties that flow from redeeming love as often inculcated and enforced? Is the practice of self-denial, and of keeping one's self unspotted from the world, of preserving a proper distance from the customs and ways of a world that lieth in wickedness, general among them? Or is the observation well founded, that, in religious societies where these sentiments are preached and received, the people enter deeply into the spirit of the world, follow its customs, adopt its maxims, and indulge liberally in its pleasures? so that it would be, if practicable, yet extremely difficult to distinguish them from a decent class in the community, which makes no profession of religion at all. Surely genuine Christianity will produce nobler effects. Is there truth in what is alleged, that by many of them the law of God is brought down to the powers and inclinations of man, instead of the powers of man being exalted by divine grace to the spirituality of the law of God? Is there generally found the same

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tenderness of conscience, the same dread of offending God, the same watchfulness against what are called little sins, and the same uneasiness when iniquity has been committed, as among those of evangelical sentiments? Compare these two systems, as to their practical influence on life; and then examine which of them most resembles the Christian conduct, as it is described in the word of God.

Another mark of right sentiments is, that the persons, who feel their influence, take pleasure in reading the word, in meditation, in prayer, and in the worship of God both in public and in private. Let us try the two systems by this test. Evangelical principles produce this temper and conduct. He is considered as inattentive and culpable who does not make conscience of morning and evening devotions in his closet. The friends of this system think lightly of that profession of religion which does not influence a man to prayer in his family from day to day. They account the sabbath a delight, they love the house of God, and take pleasure in a constant attendance on public worship, as the great business of the day; and not satisfied with social worship on the sabbath only, like the primitive Christians, they have meetings on the week-days for this purpose, and endeavour to redeem from business some time in order to receive spiritual edification and comfort. There are few societies of evangelical dissenters, where exercises of this nature are not to be found. Here then is an evident resemblance to the temper and practice
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recommended and exemplified in sacred Scripture.

Can we discover the same feature in those that take the name of Rational Believers? Do they delight as much in the worship of God? Whether some time at the beginning and close of the day be consecrated to secret devotions, I leave it to the consciences of such to determine. But, while I do not pry into their retirements, I would ask, is family religion a common thing among them? and is the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise presented by the assembled family to the great Jehovah? Is public worship as much esteemed, and are as frequent opportunities embraced of attending upon it, by them as by those of an evangelical form? And do we as frequently find persons in their societies meeting together for pious conversation and for prayer? From the observations that I have made, I am afraid there will be found a great defect here in that system. Should we not consider this as a strong objection to its truth and excellence? Perhaps I may be told that worship is but a means of religion. If, in one point of view, it be considered as the means, in another it is one of the most important parts of religion. In the description given us of heaven, worship is represented as the most important, and as the noblest part of the employment of the blessed inhabitants; and can we imagine that, which is spoken of as the highest part of religion in heaven, not to be a grand part of the religion of saints on earth?

It was given as a mark of right sentiments, that they inspire the soul with peace and hope at the approach of death. This is evident from the nature of the Christian doctrine, and from the words of holy men in Scripture, in the views of death. The question is, which of the two systems tends most to produce the same disposition; and amongst whom is there the greatest measure of joy and peace in believing, during the conflict with the king of terrors? I can say, without fear of contradiction, that evangelical Christians discover exactly the same disposition with the saints in holy writ. At the approach of death, when faith is in lively exercise, they rejoice in Christ Jesus; they bless that grace which called them, and has kept them; and they express their hope of eternal blessedness through the righteousness of God their Saviour. They adopt the language of Paul in 2 Tim. i. 12, and say, "For, I know
 " whom I have believed, and I am persuaded
 " that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." And they exult in the words of the same inspired writer, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. "O death, where is
 " thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The
 " sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is
 " the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth
 " us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Numerous instances of this temper occur in the memoirs of the great reformers from popery, of eminent divines in the last and in the present century, and of thousands of holy men and women in private stations. Here is a cloud of witnesses to bear testimony to the supporting and comforting power of the Gospel in the hour of death.

death. Those of us that minister in holy things, have seen many examples of a good hope through grace in dying Christians of our flocks. We have heard them express their trust in the promises of God, their expectation of eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ, and the hope of a speedy entrance into the joy of their Lord; and we have sometimes heard them declare the great peace and sweet consolation that their souls enjoyed, while nature was suffering a rapid decay, and their bodies were sinking by weakness and pain into the arms of death. This, I think, is a proof that evangelical principles are powerful and good.

But is the same lively hope and joy as frequently found among those that deny the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ? Do we commonly read, in the accounts of their death, of such consolation and peace? Is it found in religious societies, who adhere to this system, that at the last hour they enjoy the same comforts as evangelical believers? Is it a common thing for them to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God? They have not the same ground of hope; and the sentiments of many of them, who expect a state of insensibility between death and the resurrection, afford but a poor prospect for many hundred years to come. If, when I die, I am to have no more feeling than the clods of the valley that cover the mouldering clay, till the archangel's trumpet call the body from the grave, I have but little reason to rejoice at the hour of death. If it be but seldom that a lively hope and a sacred joy in death are produced by these sentiments, there must be something

something in them defective and wrong ; seeing they are not productive of the same effects that were produced in the primitive believers by their sentiments, and that evangelical Christians now feel from theirs.

A fervent zeal, for the salvation of precious souls, I mentioned as another mark, by which right sentiments may be known. They, that have felt the influence of good principles upon themselves, will be deeply concerned for the eternal happiness of others. Now, the enquiry is, whether shall we find the largest portion of this spirit, among those of evangelical principles, or the advocates for a different system? Which of the two are ~~the~~ most anxiously thirsting after the salvation of their fellow-creatures? Which heads of families are most diligent in teaching their children the principles of religion; in praying with them and for them; in sanctifying the sabbath-day, and in keeping themselves and their household at the greatest distance from undue conformity to the world? In which congregations is there the most lively and fervent preaching to convert perishing sinners, and the most frequent meetings for the purposes of religion? Which ministers are most diligent in preaching the word; in catechising the children and youth; in visiting the sick; in praying with the afflicted; and in exhorting sinners to cry to God for mercy and grace? Let this comparison be stretched through every part of the country, and I judge it will be found that evangelical dissenters are most zealous for converting souls to Christ, and their congregations are in a more flourishing state; whereas languor
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and indifference, in a very considerable degree, seem to have diffused their soporific influence over those of a different system; and the greater part of their congregations, though under the ministry of men of talents and learning, are gradually dwindling away. Is there nothing amiss in principles that do not produce more powerful and beneficial effects? Allow me to mention another circumstance. In the course of the last forty years, a great number of itinerant preachers has appeared through every part of the land, exhorting men to turn unto the Lord. If ye commend not the regularity of their zeal, ye must at least applaud its fervour, and their well-meant endeavours to do good. If the MAN, who travels from country to country to visit the abodes of the miserable and to procure some alleviation of distress to the guilty in their dungeons, receives the approbation of every heart for the zeal of his philanthropy and benevolence, and his fellow-citizens wish to erect a statue to his honour; is not a considerable portion of praise due to those, who, pitying the wretched case of perishing sinners, go from place to place, in order to save them from endless misery, and to free them from the bondage of iniquity, and bring them into the glorious liberty of the children of God? Of what sentiments are these men? All agree in the grand evangelical principles. Perhaps not an Arian or Socinian is to be found amongst them. I have heard of several of these preachers, who turned from evangelical sentiments to the other system: but, no sooner had they done so, than their zeal immediately forsook them; and, quitting their itinerant labours, they became
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on a sudden stationary and cold. That you may not think this mark applicable to one or two particular sects only, examine what ministers in the established church are labouring most zealously for the salvation of souls. You will find those of evangelical sentiments justly entitled to the pre-eminence. If then the common effect of those sentiments, which they call rational, be great coldness and indifference about the salvation of immortal souls, surely there is something in them wrong; and they give different views of the natural state of man from the Scriptures of truth. I make no account of warm treatises that the press is daily pouring forth in favour of Socinianism. If men be zealous in their Study for the propagation of their favourite opinions, and cold in the Pulpit, and in their prayers, and among their flock, this is not the zeal recommended in the word of God. Even the diligence of a few, who hold these sentiments, will not overthrow the general rule, more than the zeal of the emperor Antonius and the slave Epictetus will prove Paganism to be the true religion, and Christianity to be false.

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Once more: I mentioned that right sentiments may be known by this mark, that they are rejected and accounted foolishness by the self-righteous, and the children of human wisdom. Such is the reception that Christianity met with at its first appearance in the world; and such is the reception that it always will meet with from persons of a similar temper. Who will say, that there are not now men as much conceited of their knowledge and learning as the Greek philosophers

phers were? Is it not possible to find many who have as high an opinion of their own righteousness as the Pharisees among the Jews? To such persons true Christianity will be a stumbling-block and foolishness. What are the doctrines that these men cannot brook and bear? Are they not those which evangelical Christians hold? Namely, that God was manifest in the flesh in the person of Christ; that, by the atonement and righteousness of Christ alone, we obtain pardon and justification; that our natures, which are wholly depraved, must be renewed by the Holy Ghost; and that as we are all condemned by God's righteous law, we must all be saved by an act of grace. They cannot bear to be told, that the most learned, who can read all the languages that were written upon the cross, must fall down at the foot of the cross, and acknowledge that his salvation flows intirely entirely from free grace, in the same manner as the most illiterate who cannot read at all; that the most virtuous must enter in at the same door of mercy with the most profligate and vile; and that the decent matron and the man of benevolence and compassion must, along with the drunkard, the harlot, and the publican, equally acknowledge eternal life to be the gift of God through Jesus Christ. These are the doctrines that the spirit of worldly pride and of worldly wisdom cannot endure; and the rejection of them is an evidence of their truth. We meet with nothing of this kind in the other system. According to its tenets, Jesus Christ was a great prophet, who taught us our duty to God and man, who encouraged us to rely on the divine mercy for the forgiveness of sin, and assured us, that a virtuous course of life will be rewarded

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with eternal felicity. But what is there in this doctrine to offend a self-righteous spirit? What is there that can hurt the pride of human wisdom? There is then a strong presumption that is this not the pure Christian doctrine. The external circumstances that attended Christ's appearance needed not offend either Jews or Gentiles much. This great prophet was in a low condition of life; and he was put to an ignominious death, and suffered as a martyr for the truth. But were not many of the Jewish prophets in a humble station, no wise distinguished by external splendour? and did not many of them suffer a violent death by the hands of their countrymen? Why then should the Jews be so much offended at the appearance and death of Christ? There is no great stumbling-block here.* Nor had the Gentile philosophers any better reason to take offence. Persons of the greatest name among them for wisdom and virtue were not remarkable for opulence; some of them were very poor. Socrates, the great oracle of the heathen world, was not rich: nor did he meet with the treatment that he deserved. He was ridiculed by some of his countrymen; he was persecuted by others, and, on account of his maintaining the truth, he was condemned by the magistrates to suffer death. If the Christian doctrine were such as a Socinian would represent it, wherefore should the Greek philosophers have esteemed it foolishness? I can see no reason why they should ac-

* Although the Pharisees and Sadducees were much offended at the meanness of our Lord's external appearance, yet the humbling nature of his doctrine, seems evidently to have been one very considerable cause of their rejection of him.

count those things folly in Jesus of Nazareth, which were esteemed the honour and glory of Socrates of Athens. The resemblance would rather have recommended Christ and his doctrine to their notice and regard. Surely then this is not the doctrine that they rejected with so much contempt and disdain.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew you the importance of right sentiments in religion, and to point out to you what I think to be the genuine doctrines of the Gospel that were revealed by Christ and his apostles. To do justice to the subject would require the space of many discourses, whereas I am able to do nothing more than suggest a few brief hints that can be confined within the bounds of a single sermon. Permit me,

III. To direct you to some improvement of what has been said.

I. We learn hence the danger of error, and should carefully guard against it. We dread the effects of poison on the body, and of pestilential air on the constitution, because we know them to be destructive; and why are we not as much afraid of the effects of error upon the mind? If error be so harmless as some represent it, why are the sacred writers so earnest in warning us against it? Why does the Holy Ghost allow so much fire to burn in the souls of pious men, who were entirely under his guidance, while they charge Christians not to give heed to error, nor to depart from the truth? I know it is often said: "It matters not what a man's sentiments are, if

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“ his life be good.” Whether or not there is any force in this manner of speaking ye shall judge. We do not hear people say, “ It matters not how bad and unwholesome the fountain is, if the streams be good ; or how poisonous the juices of a tree are, if the fruit be good.” And the reason is, they know the connection between these to be so close, that a corrupt tree bringeth not forth good fruit, and a bitter fountain must send forth bitter streams. In like manner, a good conduct must proceed from a good temper, a good temper from good principles, and good principles from just sentiments. By a good conduct I mean that which has good principles, a good rule, good motives, and good ends. If this be kept in view, it will teach us to distinguish two things that are often confounded ; namely, a holy life, under the influence of the Gospel, and a decent respectable conduct in society, that has no higher spring than self-love, and the natural principles of action in a heart that loves worldly things better than God. Indeed it appears incompatible with that reverence, which I am taught to have for God, to view him revealing the doctrine of the Gospel in so wonderful a way ; and yet to imagine that it is of no consequence whether I understand and receive it or not, or whether I imbibe any other opinions in its place. It is commonly alleged, “ that it is impossible all should think alike, for, “ mens sentiments will be as different as their “ countenances.” I am of opinion, the truth of this may be called in question, at least with regard to the great doctrines of the Gospel : for example, such as respect our acceptance with God,

God, and the way of our restoration to the divine image. If we say that our sentiments about these things must be different, does it not throw a reflection upon the Spirit of God, as if he had not revealed things with sufficient plainness to convey distinct ideas to the mind? Or else, does it not find fault with the great and good Creator, as if he had formed his creatures in so imperfect a way, that the mind is incapable of discerning truth, but one must conjecture in one way and another in another? Our senses afford the same testimony concerning visible objects. Do we not find people agree that the grass is green and the sky is blue? and, though a philosopher once asserted and maintained that snow is black, we blame his vanity more than his organs of sight, and all agree that it is white. In certain operations of the mind too we find concord. In mathematical demonstrations men are agreed, and in well authenticated historical facts with their circumstances. Why then must they differ in religion? Paul thought they should all agree here; for he often exhorts them to be of one mind, and to maintain and speak the same things: and we actually find that pious persons in every age, though they might differ in some less matters not so clearly revealed, have been of the same mind as to the great things of the everlasting Gospel.

It may be alleged, "we should have charity for those whom we believe to be in an error." Certainly, we should have charity for all men. Charity is love; but this love does not dictate that I should call good evil for the sake of any one, nor evil good. If a person has been guilty of
perjury

perjury or murder, I am to have charity for him. This charity does not consist in thinking murder and perjury to be trifling offences, or no offences at all; but, while she teaches me to regard them as very heinous crimes, she gives me a heart full of pity to the unhappy creature who has committed them; she bids me wish him well, and pray earnestly for his forgiveness. In like manner, if a person has fallen into what the Scripture represents as a dangerous error, it is not the language of charity to me, "do not think this error great," for then she would oppose herself to truth; but she teaches me to have compassion for the man who holds the dangerous error, and to endeavour to recover him to the knowledge and belief of the sacred doctrine of Jesus Christ. If I see a man go astray from the right road, in a path that leads to quicksands, which lie concealed, and have swallowed up many a traveller; charity does not assert the man will be safe though he goes on, for truth says the contrary; but she commands me to run after him, to call to him, and bring him back again into the right way. Let us then carry this on our mind, that error is a dangerous thing: and surely those errors, that relate to the nature of God, to the character of Christ, to the condition of human nature, to the way of acceptance with God, and to the sanctification of the soul, cannot possibly be accounted small. While then we hear Christ and his apostles warning men against error, and pointing out its destructive effects, we may justly conclude that error, far from being harmless, is attended with imminent danger to precious and immortal souls.

2^d. We, who are ministers of Jesus Christ, see here what doctrines we are to preach. If truth be of importance to any, it is of double importance to us: not our own salvation only, but the salvation of our flocks depends upon it. Woe to us if we teach them error! If a father give his sons a stone instead of bread, they must be starved; if he give them instead of a fish a serpent, they will be poisoned and die. Error, instead of divine and saving truth, will produce similar, nay worse effects. Therefore, my brethren, we should carefully examine the Scriptures that we may find out the truth; we should seek to feel its power from day to day upon our hearts, and it should be our study to preach it unto others. What right sentiments are, I have endeavoured to shew; and I trust I may say, that in these doctrines we are fully agreed, we are of one mind: and in this too we agree, that they are not matters of dry speculation, but of the utmost importance; and enter into the vitals of practical religion. Let us then, my dear and beloved brethren in Christ, endeavour to stir up the gift of God that is in us, and, humbly depending on divine grace, dispense these truths to our respective congregations, as the bread from heaven on which their souls must live. Let us endeavour to preach the Gospel in all its purity without the mixture of human schemes and inventions. Let it be our earnest study to preach the word with all plainness, trying to make truths intelligible to the meanest capacity. The doctrines of divine revelation, those that are peculiarly evangelical, are not so easily unfolded as the mere dictates of natural religion; and more attention and application of mind are necessary
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in treating of them. I look upon it as a singularly valuable talent in a minister, to be able to render the evangelical doctrines plain and obvious to persons of the lowest measure of understanding and improvement. Perhaps we do not endeavour to acquire it so much as we should. Let us aim at plainness and simplicity more; it will not make discourses showy, but it will make them wise and useful. Farther, let us study to preach the word with a heart full of affection to the truth and to our hearers. A cold and dull manner of preaching, however accurate, will not engage the bulk of an audience. A heart, glowing with divine affection, and speaking the truth in love with a ~~found~~ *real* ardour, will produce more powerful and noble effects than elegant language and smoothly-flowing periods. Let us seek more of this divine warmth in preaching the truth. Let us speak as those that have felt its power, as those that relish it while they distribute it to others, and as those who most anxiously desire that their hearers may be partakers of it also. To these qualities let us endeavour to add one more. There is a divine unction attending the preaching of some ministers, which diffuses a sweet savour of divine things over the souls of their hearers; they speak in demonstration of the Spirit, and in power. How little of this do we know? When we read of the ample measure that some good men enjoyed in former times, we see reason to lament our own condition, and the manner in which the word is received. Let us, my brethren, seek this unction in a greater degree; and for this end let us be earnest in prayer for the pouring down of the Spirit upon us, that our doctrine may drop as the rain

rain and distil as the dew, and be as the showers that water the earth: and let us study to preserve the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. The effects of this unction from the Holy One will be infinitely more powerful and beneficial than the greatest exertions and displays of mere human eloquence, though attended with every possible external advantage. — Do not imagine, my brethren, that, in what I now say, I endeavour to dictate to you; I reprove myself; and the exhortations that I give, most probably condemn no one of you so much as they do the speaker. Oh! for grace to be wise, simple, faithful, and affectionate, in preaching the truth as it is in Jesus.

3. Learn hence, Christians, what the doctrines are that ye should receive. As we are bound to preach the truth, ye are bound to receive it. If we preach the truth, Christ says concerning us to the churches: “He that receiveth you receiveth me.” If any one comes who does not preach sound doctrine, or openly preaches positive error, him ye are not to receive. From the regard ye owe to the God of truth, to Jesus Christ who is called the truth itself, and to the Spirit of truth, ye are not to bid him God speed. And, while you guard against error, at your peril refuse to receive the truth. That ye may be able to distinguish truth from error, search the Scriptures, and endeavour to feel the efficacy of the doctrines they contain; and when you hear the truth spoken, give it a hearty welcome for those important purposes for which it is revealed, that it may dwell richly in you in faith and love. Once more,

4. By way of improving the subject still farther, I earnestly recommend it to you, to examine what influence the truths of the Gospel have had upon your hearts. You maintain right sentiments; but have you ever experienced their efficacy on your temper and conduct? Woe to us if we make them matters of mere speculation. This was not the design of the Most High in revealing them to us. You have right views of God; but has the sight of his justice and holiness ever filled you with grief and terror on account of your iniquities? Have you seen divine justice armed against ~~impenitent~~ ^{un} sinners for their destruction? You believe the present state of human nature to be depraved and guilty. Have you had deep and lasting convictions of your depravity and guilt, and been led to abhor yourselves in dust and in ashes? You believe that Christ is God manifest in the flesh. Have you viewed him as able and willing to save? Have you, under a lively feeling of your distress, fled to his atoning blood for pardon, and to his Spirit for renewing grace? Have you found your nature sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and peace from dependance on Christ? Can you trace such operations of the mind and such effects as these? Carefully examine; for your most important interests are concerned. You believe that Christians live by dependance on God for his assistance at all times. Do you lead such a life? Is it your endeavour to glorify God by a conversation becoming the Gospel? and do ye feel an anxious desire to promote the salvation of the souls of others?

Some,

Some, perhaps, are obliged to reply: " we have felt no such effects from the word of " God." Woe to you, however sound in sentiment, if erroneous in conduct! It plainly appears, that the doctrines of the Gospel are not principles dwelling in your heart, but useless opinions floating in your brain. However zealous ye may be for the truth in defending it against gainsayers, woe to you if you hold the truth in unrighteousness! Lay to heart your miserable condition. God is your enemy: you are under the curse of his law; the Gospel condemns you too: much precious time has been lost; and your hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. None of the promises of Scripture belong to you: all its threatnings are your portion. Look forward and see before you the horrors of death, the anguish of judgement, and the misery of hell: these are yours, if God be true. Such is the lot of every impenitent sinner: you cannot escape while you remain in your present state. Lay your condition to heart without delay. Do ye say, " what must I do to be saved?" I answer in the language of the Holy Ghost: " Believe on " the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved; " and, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Cry to him for help who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin. The Gospel entreats, invites, and commands you to come to Christ that you may have life. Obey its voice, and betake yourselves without delay to that kind friend of man, who came to seek and to save that which was lost; and who has graciously promised to the labouring and heavy laden, that, if they come unto him, he will

will give them rest unto their souls. Ten thousands have found the accomplishment of his promise. May ye find it too, to your present comfort and your eternal joy!

Many here present have, I hope, felt the energy of the truth upon their hearts. Bless God for his goodness to you on this account, and to him be all the praise. Be zealous for the truth as it is in Jesus; study to be always under its influence, and hold forth the word of life to the world by the purity of your conduct. It has been said, that the doctrines of grace lead to licentiousness; shew, by your deportment, that they lead to exalted degrees of holiness, joy, and peace. At the same time let us endeavour to make the truth more extensively known. Parents, teach it to your children: masters, instruct your households in the knowledge of it. Let us all consider it as a sacred deposit committed to our care, and endeavour to convey it in its purity to the next generation; that when we lie down in the dust, others may rise in our place to assert, to preach, to feel, to live upon these blessed doctrines of the everlasting Gospel, for which to the only wise God be ascribed everlasting praise!

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